

December 7, 2020

Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board
Attn: Peter Musty, Principle Planner & Zoning Administrator
204 Administration Building
50 Sherburne Avenue, Suite 204
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Board members:

We are writing on behalf of the Ramsey County Citizens Advisory Council (CAC). The CAC consists of seven (7) committees: Adult Mental Health (AMH) Advisory Council, Adult Services, Chemical Health, Children's Mental Health (CMH) Advisory Council, Children's Services Review Panel (CSRP), Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and Low Income. The CAC is made up of individuals with lived experience, family members, service providers, and community advocates whose responsibility it is to make recommendations for the development or modification of the service delivery system and to identify needs, community priorities and service gaps.

Over the past two years, each of these committees, councils and the panel has focused on housing issues and initiatives that intersect with State, Federal and advocacy-based legislative priorities based upon the strategic priorities identified by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners. We know that safe shelter is a basic need. Without stable housing, children, adults and families face significant challenges to their well-being and will not thrive. Region-wide lack of affordable housing and increasing rents are making it difficult for more residents to secure housing, especially those individuals that live on a low income or who face additional barriers, such as racial and health disparities.

The CAC receives monthly updates regarding the County's actions which include COVID-19 and the wide range of issues, as well as the County's efforts to temporarily house the 300 plus individuals who are currently unsheltered on any given night. CAC members have been kept apprised of the County's plans to utilize Bethesda Hospital and Luther Seminary for unsheltered individuals, which is critically needed to support our community. CAC leaders have attended town hall meetings for both proposed projects and have been encouraged by the County's outreach for community engagement. While this has been a rapidly evolving project for the County, we feel that the County has been transparent with the community and welcomed feedback.

It is our understanding that on December 16, 2020, the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board will be considering the County's proposal to utilize Bethesda Hospital as temporary housing site beginning this winter. The Ramsey County Citizens Advisory Council supports this proposal and hopes that the Planning Board will approve this project.

Citizens Advisory Council
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Sincerely,

Jill Gunderson-Gernes, Chair
Ramsey County Citizens Advisory Council

Tom Berkas & Tyler Dahlke, AMH Advisory Council
Teisha Magee, Adult Services
Mary Her & Mary Mischke, CMH Advisory Council
Tony Porter, CSRP
Rosalie Eisenreich & Margaret Schuster, IDD
Maurice Hodges & Erica Valliant, Low Income
Chemical Health Committee

CC: Trista MatasCastillo, Commissioner, Ramsey County – District 3
Kathy Hedin, Deputy County Manager, Health and Wellness Service Team
Anne Barry, Director, Social Services Department,
Jennifer Schuster-Jaeger, Director, Health and Wellness Administrative Division
Leigh Ann Ahmad, Planning Manager, Health and Wellness Administrative Division